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A CHAPTER OF
REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

WASHINGTON AT VALLEY FORGE

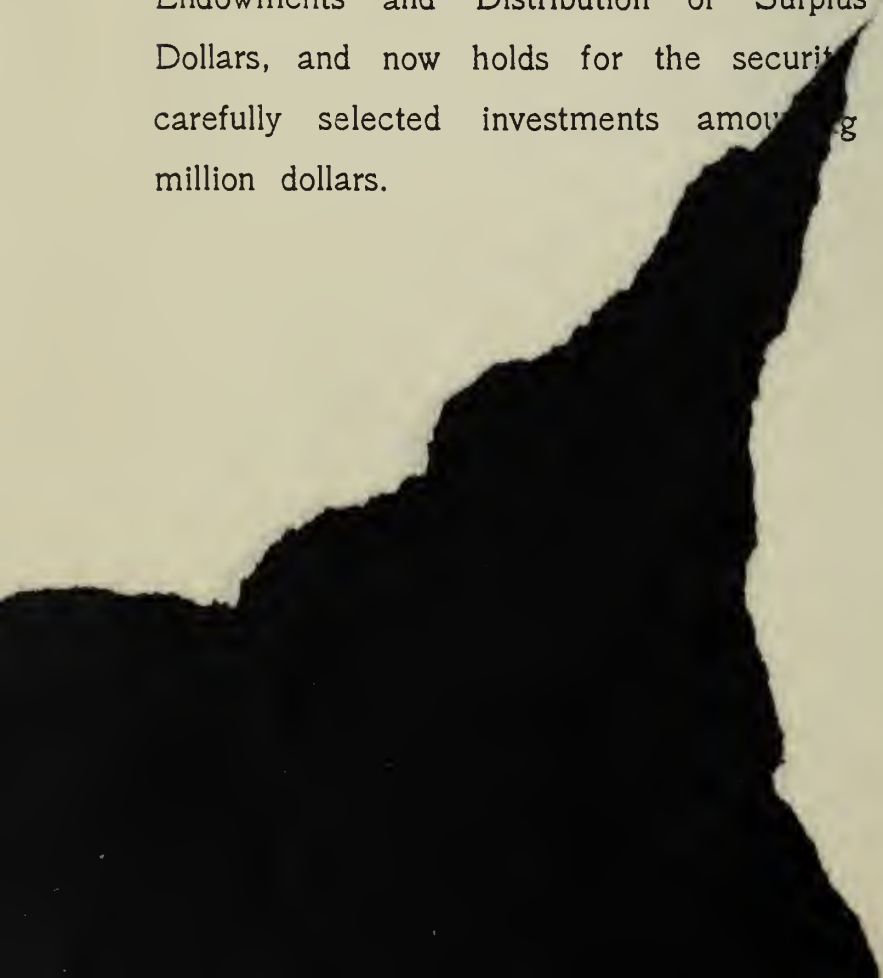
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WASHINGTON AT VALLEY FORGE.



THE NEW ENGLAND MUTUAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY's Calendar for 1898 is entitled "Washington at Valley Forge," and he is represented at the instant after he has completed the reading of the celebrated Duché letter which had been addressed to him by the Rev. Jacob Duché, the first chaplain of the Continental Congress, an office which this would-be traitor to his country resigned after having filled it for a short time only. This letter is given in full, for the reason that few readers are familiar with it *in extenso*, and for the remarkable line of argument the reverend gentleman followed to induce Washington to treat with Sir William Howe for the surrender of the Continental army.

The dignified expression upon the countenance of the Commander-in-Chief, the attitude, the pose of the head, all have been so deftly caught by the artist that the beholder cannot but realize that the picture as a whole will bear comparison with any of the many portraits which have come down to

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the present generation, and it gives certainly as true an idea of the man as the full-length portraits of Peale and Trumbull, which were taken while he was in command of the American army.

This treasonable attempt on the part of Duché to induce Washington to swerve from the line of duty to the cause upon which he had embarked was futile, but it has its place in history, coming as it did at a time when the Colonies were almost in their death throes, occasioned by ignorance on the part of Congress and conspiracies, to one of which a more extended allusion will be made.

No writer of our Revolutionary history has told the story of Valley Forge so well or in better words than Prof. John Fiske in his "American Revolution," which must be read and carefully digested before its transcendent merit as one of the best if not the best work upon the subject can be fully appreciated. In the summing up of the chapter on Valley Forge, wherein the author speaks of the sufferings of the American army in their camp on the borders of the Schuylkill, the deplorable acts of Congress and the conspiracies which, if they had been successful, must have deprived

the American people of their independence, he pays this splendid tribute to the character of Washington: "As the defeat of the Conway cabal marked the beginning of the decline of Congress, it marked at the same time the rise of Washington to a higher place in the hearts of the people than he had ever held before. As the silly intrigues against him recoiled upon their authors, men began to realize that it was far more upon his consummate sagacity and unselfish patriotism than upon anything that Congress could do that the country rested its hopes of success in the great enterprise it had undertaken. In him and his work were centred the common hopes and the common interests of all the American people. There was no need of clothing him with extraordinary powers. During the last years of the war he came through sheer weight of personal character to wield an influence like that which Pericles had wielded over the Athenians. He was all-powerful because he was 'first in the hearts of his countrymen.' Few men since history began had ever occupied so lofty a position, none ever made a more disinterested use of power. His arduous labors taught him to appreciate better than any one else the weakness entailed upon the country

by the want of a stable central government. But when the war was over, and the political problem came into the foreground, instead of using this knowledge to make himself personally indispensable to the country, he bent all the weight of his character and experience towards securing the adoption of such a federal constitution as should make anything like a dictatorship forever unnecessary and impossible."

This preface serves to introduce to the readers of this monograph an event or epoch in the war of the Revolution which has seldom met with the treatment it deserves at the hands of the historian. We hear occasionally of "the times which tried men's souls;" but when dangers are passed, how little do these brave words remain in our minds, how soon they are forgotten! and yet no man ever lived who saw more of these days than Washington. What more fearful epoch was there in the history of the nation than that of Valley Forge, when the great leader was surrounded, not only by conspiracy and treason, but when his little army lay starving and freezing and poorly clad—aye, many of them barefooted—in one of the most pitiless winters of the war, that of 1777-78.

The campaign of that winter began on the landing of Sir William Howe in command of the British forces at Elkton, Del., on the 18th of August, 1777, and closed on the memorable 11th of December of the same year in Whitemarsh, Penn., which resulted in the defeat of Washington at Brandywine and Germantown, the occupation of Philadelphia by the British army during the following winter, and the withdrawal of the Continental army to the uninviting heights of Valley Forge.

In September, 1777, Washington wrote: "At least one thousand men were barefooted and performed the marches in that condition." At one time they were three days without bread; on another, two days without a particle of meat. Of still a third day we read, "few men had more than one shirt, many only the moiety of one, and more none at all."

During the dreary winter at Valley Forge, Washington wrote (February 16, 1778): "For some days past there has been little less than a famine in the camp. A part of the army has been a week without any kind of flesh, and the rest three or four days. Naked and starving as they are we cannot enough admire the incomparable patience and fidelity of the soldiers that they have not been ere this

excited by their sufferings to a general mutiny and dispersion."

At no period of the war, wrote Chief Justice Marshall, "had the American army been reduced to a situation of greater peril than during the winter at Valley Forge. More than once they were absolutely without food. Even while their condition was less desperate in this respect, their stock of provisions was so scanty that there was seldom at any time in the stores a quantity sufficient for the use of the troops for a week. Consequently, had the enemy moved out in force, the American army could not have continued in camp. The want of provisions would have forced them out of it, and their deplorable condition with respect to clothes disabled them from keeping the field in winter. The returns of the first of February exhibit the astonishing number of 3,989 men in camp unfit for duty for want of clothes. Of this number scarcely a man had a pair of shoes. Even among those returned as capable of duty very many were so badly clad that exposure to the colds of the season must have destroyed them." Out of 17,000 men occupying Valley Forge no more than 5,012 could be considered as effective rank and file.

“Yet, amidst all this suffering, day after day,” remarks Lossing, “surrounded by frost and snow, patriotism was still warm and hopeful in the hearts of the soldiers, and the love of self was merged in the holy sentiment of love of country. It was one of the most trying scenes in the life of Washington; but a cloud of doubt seldom darkened the serene atmosphere of his hopes. He knew that the cause was just and holy, and his faith and confidence in God as a defender and helper of right were as steady in their ministrations of vigor to his soul as were the pulsations of his heart to his limbs. In perfect reliance upon Divine Providence he moved in the midst of crushed hopes, and planned brilliant schemes for the future.”

Dr. Waldo, an army surgeon who served at Valley Forge during the dreadful winter of 1777-78, has left a diary of the events of that time, in which he wrote: “The winter passed in Valley Forge was the gloomiest period of the war. The men were encamped in cold, comfortless huts, with little food or clothing. Barefooted they left on the ground their tracks in blood. Few had blankets, and straw could not be obtained.”

Dr. Albigen Waldo was of French descent, born

in Pomfret, Conn.; he joined the Eleventh Connecticut Regiment of militia in 1775, serving four years; he married a relative of General Putnam, and died January 20, 1794, the result of his sufferings at Valley Forge. His diary at Valley Forge begins on November 10, 1777, and his entry for that day ends with "No salt to eat dinner with." At a later day (December 8th), or, rather, at midnight, his regiment with sixteen others was called up to parade before Washington's quarters under command of Sullivan and Wayne, and about one o'clock news came that the enemy had made a precipitate retreat into the city of Philadelphia. After sickness and much personal suffering Dr. Waldo, on December 18th, wrote: "Universal thanksgiving—a roasted pig at night! The army are poorly supplied with provisions, owing, it is said, to the neglect of the Commissary of Purchases. The Congress have not made their commissions valuable enough. Heaven avert the bad consequences of these things!

"Dec. 22d. Lay excessive cold last night. My eyes are started out from their orbits like a rabbit's eyes, occasioned by great cold and smoke. 'What have you got for breakfast, lads?'—'Fire cake and water, sir.'—'The Lord send that our Commissary

of Purchases may live on fire cake and water till their gluttoned guts are turned to pasteboard.' That night the doctor's mess got a little mutton with which they made broth.

"Dec. 28th. Yesterday upwards of fifty officers in General Greene's division resigned their commissions, and six or seven of our regiment are to do the like to-day." For several days huts were being built into which to remove the poor sick, who had heretofore lived in tents subject to the cold and bleak winds.

"Dec. 31st. Adjutant Selden of the Eleventh Connecticut has many things to do, and one thing not strictly within the line of his duties. He taught me to darn stockings to make them look like knit-work, — first, work the thread in a parallel manner, then catch those over and over."

"Jan. 1, 1778. New Year. I am alive; I am well. His Excellency issued an order this day that no one in the army should have a new coat made without first obtaining a pattern."

A great event which occurred about this time was the capture of a British ship in the Delaware, the greatest prize ever taken from the enemy. Its cargo was cloth of various hues, hats, shirts, stock-

ings, shoes, boots, spurs, etc., enough to clothe all the officers of the British army. But this interesting diary, of which so little has been given, closes on January 15th, on the road to Fredericksburg, the doctor having set out on a furlough accompanied by Mr. Adams, who doubtless was either John or Samuel Adams.

It must now be apparent to the reader that the difficulties which beset Washington at the period whereof we write were of no common character, but, notwithstanding their intense sufferings, he had the rank and file of the troops with him. The spirit that animated the army when it lay encamped at Valley Forge in the memorable winter of 1777-78 was the love of country; it was not fighting for the spoils of conquest or the oppression of a race, but for a home. Harassed by tiresome marches and perpetual alarms, their life was one continual scene of hardship and danger; their feet were naked and bleeding amidst the driving snows of winter, and they lay down in that dreary camp to become acquainted with hunger, cold, and watchfulness. "The history of the world presents no parallel to the sublime heroism which, animated and sustained by the

immortal Washington, upheld and sustained the cause of freedom through the glorious period of American history. What devotion and courage, and, alas, too, what pity at the recital of their sufferings! Far from home, their sufferings unrelieved by their almost despairing country, no wife nor mother near to relieve their wants or close their eyes in death, they sank into the grave almost unnoticed, with no friendly tear but those of sorrowing comrades shed for their sufferings or mingled with their dust. The sufferings of the men at Valley Forge have consecrated the spot in every patriot heart; and while history, tradition, and art shall transmit the tragic story to remotest posterity as a sublime incentive to emulation when the impaired liberties of their country shall summon them to arms, just so long will their record be one that the ancient warriors of Greece or Rome might have envied."

What nobler tribute can be imagined than is contained in these words!

The headquarters of Washington were at a substantial brick house belonging to Isaac Potts, and they are represented and form a part of the Calendar for 1898, the whole of which has been called

“Washington at Valley Forge.” His own room was a very small one. In the broad sill of the window there was a little trap-door with a cavity beneath it which he had arranged as a secret depository for his papers. In this humble apartment he toiled incessantly to alleviate the sufferings of his army and to retrieve the adverse fortunes of his country.

One of the most prominent traits of Washington’s character was his steady reliance on Divine aid; and with a firm conviction of the justice of his cause he moved on, calm and serene amid the distrust of friends and the imputations of his enemies, with bright hopes and brilliant plans for the future.

As an instance of Washington’s trust in prayer, Lossing in his “Field Book of the Revolution” relates the following interesting incident: “Isaac Potts, the owner of the house occupied by Washington as his headquarters, one day strolled up the creek. When not far away he heard a solemn voice. He walked quietly in the direction of it, and saw Washington’s horse tied to a sapling. In a thicket near by was the beloved chief upon his knees in prayer, his cheeks suffused with tears. Like Moses at the burning bush, the silent auditor felt that he was upon holy ground, and withdrew

unobserved. He was much agitated, and, on entering the room where his wife was, he burst into tears. On her inquiring the cause, he informed her of what he had seen, and added, 'If there is any one on this earth whom the Lord will listen to, it is George Washington; and I feel a presentiment that under such a commander there can be no doubt of our eventually establishing our independence, and that God in his providence has willed it so.'"

"Oh, who shall know the might
Of the words he uttered there?
The fate of nations there was turned
By the fervor of his prayer."

But the patriot army still suffered. Congress, inexperienced in the management of affairs, was not competent to cope with the situation, and advised the seizure of everything that would serve to supply the army. This turned out a most unfortunate as well as unpopular move. Washington dissented from this advice, for many of the inhabitants of the surrounding country were Tories, and they might, under a forcible seizure of their cattle and stores, become more incensed, and thus create a greater obstacle to the success of the Continental

army. Instead of levying upon the property of these timorous and misguided but oftentimes well-inclined men, he wrote to the various governors of New England, urging them in the most pressing terms to forward with the greatest dispatch provisions for the army, particularly cattle, of which there was an abundance in the provinces. In the mean time there was an issue by Congress of paper money, and laws were passed fixing the price of labor. The citizens secreted their effects, and there was a general distrust throughout the country occasioned by the reverses of the American arms.

The American camp at Valley Forge presented a terrible picture of distress; gaunt famine stalked abroad, and disease was rife, and the hospitals were crowded with those who looked forward to nothing short of death. The well suffered for want of straw; they lay upon the bare and frozen earth, and at night had no refreshing sleep: more perished from exposure than by the sword. The food was unwholesome and scanty, for the coarsest provisions could scarcely be procured. The sick had no change of linen, and the hospitals were not worthy the name.

Washington was untiring in his efforts to ameliorate

the condition of his army; and to the love and veneration which his soldiers bore him is to be attributed their continued existence through that perilous period. The sorrows and sufferings as depicted by Lossing and other authorities were heart-rending in the extreme.

At last Baron Steuben joined the army before Valley Forge, May, 1778, and was appointed Inspector-General, with the rank and pay of Major-General. This veteran commander and disciplinarian had served in the army of Frederick the Great of Prussia. He was a sound military writer, a tactician, a brave man, and a warm-hearted friend of America. His services to the Continental forces at various times are recorded in the grand history of the Revolution. Out of chaos he brought order. No wonder that after the close of the war Frederick the Great, as quoted by Finley, presented his sword to Washington, who received it at the hands of a special messenger dispatched to the United States for that purpose. It was a straight Toledo blade, and bore upon the guard of its richly chased basket hilt the inscription, "From the oldest soldier in Europe to the greatest soldier in the world."

“That terse but splendid tribute to Washington as a military commander came from Europe’s acknowledged greatest master of the art of war, the victor of the renowned battlefields of Rossbach, Leuthen, Zorndorf, and Liegnitz, who in the Seven Years’ War baffled and defeated the combined armies of Austria, Russia, the German Empire, and France.”

Nor were the disasters and starvation at Valley Forge all that our great General had to encounter: there were tricky men around him who formed cliques, intrigues, and cabals against him, their purpose being to supplant him in the command of the army; indeed there were, too, several attempts to subvert the government itself. Then it was that this great man subjugated self to the great work before him; he indulged in no secret discontent against his country; his enemies were unnoticed and rendered powerless by his silence, and in his devotion to his country he seems to have forgotten himself.

“At the end of the year 1777 people could only see that Burgoyne had surrendered to Gates, while Washington had lost two battles and the city of

Philadelphia. Accordingly there were many who supposed that Gates must be a better general than Washington, and in the army there were some discontented spirits who were only too glad to take advantage of this feeling. One of these malcontents was an Irish adventurer, Thomas Conway, who had long served in France, and who came over here in time to take part in the battles of Brandywine and Germantown. He had a grudge against Washington as Charles Lee had. He thought he could get on better if Washington were out of the way. So he busied himself in organizing a kind of conspiracy against Washington which came to be known as the 'Conway cabal.' Gates was to succeed to the command of the army in place of Washington. Gates and Conway hoped by thwarting and insulting Washington to wound his pride and force him to resign. The attempts to injure Washington recoiled upon their authors. Never, perhaps, was Washington so grand as in that sorrowful winter at Valley Forge." (*The War of Independence: Prof. John Fiske.*)

A treasonable attempt to induce Washington to surrender the army to the British was made by

Rev. Jacob Duché, formerly Rector of Christ's Church in Philadelphia, a man of great eloquence and piety, who had been appointed by Congress its first chaplain, whose prayer upon the opening of the session was pronounced to be not only eloquent but patriotic in the extreme. We give it here in full, that our readers may judge between the patriotic utterances of the prayer and the treasonable sentiments of the letter he subsequently wrote to Washington:—

“O Lord our Heavenly Father, high and mighty, King of kings and Lord of lords, who dost from Thy throne behold all the dwellers on earth, and reignest with power supreme and uncontrolled over all kingdoms, empires, and governments, look down in mercy, we beseech Thee, on these American States, who have fled to Thee from the rod of the oppressor, and thrown themselves on Thy gracious protection, desiring to be henceforth dependent only on Thee; to Thee they have appealed for the righteousness of their cause; to Thee do they now look up for that countenance and support which Thou alone canst give; take them, therefore, Heavenly Father, under Thy nurturing care; give them wisdom in council and valor in the field; defeat the malicious designs of our cruel adversaries; convince *them* of the unrighteousness of their cause; and if they still persist in their sanguinary purposes, Oh, let the voice of Thine own unerring justice sounding in their hearts constrain them to drop

the weapons of war from their unnerved hands in the day of battle! Be thou present, O God of wisdom, and direct the councils of this honorable assembly; enable them to settle things on the best and surest foundation that the scene of blood may be speedily closed; that order, harmony, and peace may be effectually restored, and truth and justice, religion and piety, prevail and flourish amongst Thy people. Preserve the health of their bodies and the vigor of their minds; shower down on *them* and the *millions* they here represent such temporal blessings as Thou seest expedient for them in this world, and crown them with everlasting glory in the world to come. All this we ask in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Saviour. Amen."

While this eloquent prayer was being uttered there was but one man knelt in that whole assembly, and that man was George Washington.

In the Calendar Washington is represented as having just read the Duché letter, which he immediately transmitted to Congress accompanied by the following note, dated October 16, 1777:—

"I yesterday, through the hands of Mrs. Ferguson of Graham Park, received a letter of a very curious and extraordinary nature from Mr. Jacob Duché, which I have thought proper to transmit to Congress. To this ridiculous, illiberal performance I made a short reply, by desiring the bearer of it, if she should hereafter by any accident meet Mr. Duché, to tell him I should have

returned it unopened if I had had any idea of the contents; observing, at the same time, that I highly disapproved the intercourse she seemed to have been carrying on, and expected it would be discontinued. Notwithstanding the author's assertion, I cannot but suspect that the measure did not originate with him, and that he was induced to it by the hope of establishing his interest and peace more effectually with the enemy."

We venture to give the letter in full, that the reader may judge of it in the light of history:—

FROM THE REV. JACOB DUCHÉ TO GEORGE WASHINGTON.

PHILADELPHIA, 8 October, 1777.

SIR,— If this letter should find you in council or in the field, before you read another sentence I beg you to take the first opportunity of retiring and weighing its important contents. You are perfectly acquainted with the part I formerly took in the present unhappy contest. I was, indeed, among the first to bear my public testimony against having any recourse to threats, or indulging a thought of an armed opposition.

The current, however, was too strong for my feeble efforts to resist. I wished to follow my countrymen as far only as virtue and the righteousness of their cause would permit me. I was, however, prevailed on, among the rest of my clerical brethren of this city, to gratify the pressing desires of my fellow-citizens by preaching a sermon to the second city battalion. I was pressed to publish this sermon, and reluctantly consented. From a personal attachment of nearly twenty years' standing and a

high respect for your character, in private as well as public life, I took the liberty of dedicating this sermon to you. I had your affectionate thanks for my performance in a letter, wherein was expressed, in the most delicate and obliging terms, your regard for me, and your wishes for a continuance of my friendship and approbation of your conduct. Further than this I intended not to proceed. My sermon speaks for itself, and wholly disclaims the idea of independence. My sentiments were well known to my friends. I communicated them without reserve to many respectable members of Congress, who expressed their warm approbation of it then. I persisted to the very last moment to use the prayers for my Sovereign, though threatened with insults from the violence of a party.

Upon the declaration of independence I called my vestry and solemnly put the question to them whether they thought it best for the peace and welfare of the congregation to shut up the churches, or to continue the service without using the prayers for the Royal Family. This was the sad alternative. I concluded to abide by their decision, as I could not have time to consult my spiritual superiors in England. They determined it most expedient, under such critical circumstances, to keep open the churches that the congregations might not be dispersed, which we had great reason to apprehend.

A very few days after the fatal declaration of independence I received a letter from Mr. Hancock, sent by express to Germantown, where my family were for the summer season, acquainting me I was appointed Chaplain to the Congress, and desired my attendance next morning at nine o'clock. Surprised and distressed as I was by an event I was not prepared to

expect, obliged to give an immediate attendance without the opportunity of consulting my friends. I easily accepted the appointment. I could have but one motive for taking this step. I thought the churches in danger, and hoped by this means to have been instrumental in preventing those ills I had so much reason to apprehend. I can, however, with truth declare I then looked upon independence rather as an expedient, and hazardous, or, indeed, thrown out *in terrorem*, in order to procure some favorable terms, than a measure that was seriously persisted in. My sudden change of conduct will clearly evince this to have been my idea of the matter.

Upon the return of the Committee of Congress appointed to confer with Lord Howe I soon discerned their whole intentions. The different accounts which each member gave of this conference, the time they took to make up the matter for public view, and the amazing disagreements between the newspaper accounts, and the relation I myself had from the mouth of one of the Committee, convinced me there must have been some unfair and ungenerous procedure. This determination to treat on no other strain than that of independence, which put it out of his lordship's power to mention any terms at all, was sufficient proof to me that independence was the idol they had long wished to set up, and that rather than sacrifice this they would deluge their country with blood. From this moment I determined upon my resignation, and in the beginning of October, 1775, sent it in form to Mr. Hancock, after having officiated only two months and three weeks; and from that time, as far as my safety would permit, I have been opposed to all their measures.

This circumstantial account of my conduct I think due to the

friendship you were so obliging as to express for me, and I hope will be sufficient to justify my seeming inconsistencies in the part I have acted.

And now, dear sir, suffer me in the language of truth and real affection to address myself to you. All the world must be convinced you are engaged in the service of your country from motives perfectly disinterested. You risked everything that was dear to you, abandoned the sweets of domestic life which your affluent fortune can give the uninterrupted enjoyment of. But had you, could you have had, the least idea of matters being carried to such a dangerous extremity? Your most intimate friends shuddered at the thought of a separation from the mother country, and I took it for granted that your sentiments coincided with theirs. What, then, can be the consequence of this rash and violent measure and degeneracy of representation, confusion of councils, blunders without number? The most respectable characters have withdrawn themselves, and are succeeded by a great majority of illiberal and violent men. Take an impartial view of the present Congress, and what can you expect from them? Your feelings must be greatly hurt by the representation of your native province. You have no longer a Randolph, a Bland, or a Braxton, men whose names will ever be revered, whose demands never ran above the first ground on which they set out, and whose truly glorious and virtuous sentiments I have frequently heard with rapture from their own lips. Oh, my dear sir, what a sad contrast of characters now presents! others whose friends can ne'er mingle with your own. Your Harrison alone remains, and he disgusted with the unworthy associates.

As to those of my own province, some of them are so obscure that their very names were never in my ears before, and others have only been distinguished for the weakness of their understandings and the violence of their tempers. One alone I except from the general charge: a man of virtue, dragged reluctantly into their measures, and restrained by some false ideas of honor from retreating after having gone too far. You cannot be at a loss to discover whose name answers to this character.

From the New England provinces can you find one that as a gentleman you could wish to associate with, unless the soft and mild address of Mr. Hancock can atone for his want of every other qualification necessary for the seat which he fills? Bankrupts, attorneys, and men of desperate fortunes are his colleagues. Maryland no longer sends a Tilghman and a Carroll. Carolina has lost her Lynch, and the elder Middleton has retired. Are the dregs of Congress, then, still to influence a mind like yours? These are not the men you engaged to serve; these are not the men that America has chosen to represent her. Most of them were chosen by a little, low faction, and the few gentlemen that are among them now are well known to lie on the balance, and looking up to your hand alone to turn the beam. 'Tis you, sir, and you only that supports the present Congress; of this you must be fully sensible. Long before they left Philadelphia their dignity and consequence were gone; what must it be now since their precipitate retreat? I write with freedom, but without invective. I know these things to be true, and I write to one whose own observation must have convinced him that it is so.

After this view of the Congress, turn to the army. The whole world knows that its only existence depends upon you, that your death or captivity disperses it in a moment, and that there is not a man on that side—the question in America—capable of succeeding you. As to the army itself, what have you to expect from them? Have they not frequently abandoned you yourself in the hour of extremity? Can you have the least confidence in a set of undisciplined men and officers, many of whom have been taken from the lowest of the people, without principle, without courage? Take away them that surround your person, how very few there are you can ask to sit at your table! As to your little navy, of that little what is left? Of the Delaware fleet part are taken, and the rest must soon surrender. Of those in the other provinces some are taken, one or two at sea, and others lying unmanned and unrigged in your harbors.

And, now, where are your resources? Oh, my dear sir, how sadly have you been abused by a faction void of truth, and void of tenderness to you and your country! They have amused you with hopes of a declaration of war on the part of France. Believe me, from the best authority, it was a fiction from the first. Early in the year 1776 a French gentleman was introduced to me, with whom I became intimately acquainted. His business, to all appearance, was to speculate in the mercantile way. But I believe it will be found that in his country he moved in a higher sphere. He saw your cause. He became acquainted with all your military preparations. He was introduced to Congress, and engaged with them in a commercial contract. In the course of our intimacy he has frequently told me that he hoped the Americans would never think of independence. He gave me

his reasons: "Independence can never be supported unless France should declare war against England. I well know the state of her finances. Years to come will not put them in a situation to enter upon a breach with England. At this moment there are two parties in the Court of Versailles: one enlisted under the Duke de Choiseul, the other under the Count Maurepas. Choiseul has no chance of succeeding, though he is violent for war. Maurepas must get the better; he is for economy and peace." This was his information, which I mentioned to several members of Congress. They treated it as a fable, depending entirely on Dr. Franklin's intelligence.

The truth of the matter is this: Dr. Franklin built upon the success of Choiseul. Upon his arrival in France he found him out of place, his counsels reprobated, and his party dwindled into an insignificant faction. This you may depend upon to be the true state of affairs in France, or the court of Dr. F. And, further, by vast numbers of letters found on board prizes taken by the king's ships, it appears that all commerce with the merchants, through whom all your supplies have been conveyed, will be at an end, the letters being full of complaints of no remittances from America, and many individuals having generally suffered.

From your friends in England you have nothing to expect. Their numbers have diminished to a cipher; the spirit of the whole nation is inactivity; a few sounding names among the nobility, though perpetually ringing in your ears, are without character, without influence. Disappointed ambition has made them desperate, and they only wish to make the deluded Americans instruments of revenge. All orders and ranks of men

in Great Britain are now unanimous and determined to risk their all with content. Trade and manufactures are found to flourish, and new channels are continually offering that will perhaps more than supply the loss of the old.

In America your harbors are blocked up, your cities fall one after another; fortress after fortress, battle after battle is lost. A British army, after having passed unmolested through a vast extent of country, have possessed themselves of the Capital of America. How unequal the contest! How fruitless the expense of blood! Under so many discouraging circumstances, can virtue, can honor, can the love of your country, prompt you to proceed? Humanity itself, and sure humanity is no stranger to your breast, calls upon you to desist. Your army must perish for want of common necessities or thousands of innocent families must perish to support them; wherever they encamp, the country must be impoverished; wherever they march, the troops of Britain will pursue, and must complete the destruction which America herself has begun. Perhaps it may be said, it is better to die than to be made slaves. This, indeed, is a splendid maxim in theory, and perhaps in some instances may be found experimentally true; but when there is the least probability of a happy accommodation, surely, wisdom and humanity call for some sacrifices to be made to prevent inevitable destruction. You well know there is but one invincible bar to such an accommodation; could this be removed, other obstacles might readily be removed. It is to you and you alone your bleeding country looks and calls aloud for this sacrifice. Your arm alone has strength sufficient to remove this bar. May heaven inspire you with this glorious resolution of exerting your strength at this crisis, and immortalizing yourself

as friend and guardian to your country! Your penetrating eye needs not more explicit language to discern my meaning. With that prudence and delicacy, therefore, of which I know you possessed, represent to Congress the indispensable necessity of rescinding the hasty and ill-advised declaration of independence. Recommend, and you have an undoubted right to recommend, an immediate cessation of hostilities. Let the controversy be taken up where that declaration left it, and where Lord Howe certainly expected to find it left. Let men of clear and impartial characters, in or out of Congress, liberal in their sentiments, heretofore independent in their fortunes,—and some such may be found in America,—be appointed to confer with His Majesty's Commissioners. Let them, if they please, propose some well-digested constitutional plan to lay before them at the commencement of the negotiation. When they have gone thus far I am confident the usual happy consequences will ensue,—unanimity will immediately take place through the different provinces, thousands who are now ardently wishing and praying for such a measure will step forth and declare themselves the zealous advocates for constitutional liberty, and millions will bless the hero that left the field of war to decide this most important contest with the weapons of wisdom and humanity.

Oh, sir, let no false ideas of worldly honor deter you from engaging in so glorious a task! Whatever censure may be thrown out by mean, illiberal minds, your character will rise in the estimation of the virtuous and noble. It will appear with lustre in the annals of history, and form a glorious contrast to that of those who have fought to obtain conquest and gratify their own ambition by the destruction of their species and the

ruin of their country. Be assured, sir, that I write not this under the eye of any British officer or person connected with the British army or ministry. The sentiments I express are the real sentiments of my own heart, such as I have long held, and which I should have made known to you by letter before had I not fully expected an opportunity of a private conference. When you passed through Philadelphia on your way to Wilmington I was confined by a severe fit of the gravel to my chamber; I have since continued much indisposed, and times have been so very distressing that I had neither spirit to write a letter nor an opportunity to convey it when written, nor do I yet know by what means I shall get these sheets to your hands.

I would fain hope that I have said nothing by which your delicacy can be in the least hurt. If I have, I assure you it has been without the least intention, and therefore your candor will lead you to forgive me. I have spoken freely of Congress and of the army; but what I have said is partly from my own knowledge and partly from the information of some respectable members of the former and some of the best officers of the latter. I would not offend the meanest person upon earth; what I say to you I say in confidence to answer what I cannot but deem a most *valuable purpose*. I love my country; I love you; but to the love of truth, the love of peace, and the love of God, I hope I should be enabled if called upon to the trial to sacrifice every other inferior love.

If the arguments made use of in this letter should have so much influence as to engage you in the glorious work which I have warmly recommended, I shall ever deem my success the highest temporal favor that Providence could grant me. Your

interposition and advice I am confident would meet with a favorable reception from the authority under which you act.

If it should not, you have an infallible recourse still left,—negotiate for your country at the head of your army. After all, it may appear presumption as an individual to address himself to you on a subject of such magnitude, or to say what measures would best secure the interest and welfare of a whole continent. The friendly and favorable opinion you have always expressed for me emboldens me to undertake it, and which has greatly added to the weight of this motive. I have been strongly impressed with a sense of duty upon the occasion, which left my conscience uneasy and my heart afflicted till I fully discharged it. I am no enthusiast; the course is new and singular to me; but I could not enjoy one moment's peace till this letter was written. With the most ardent prayers for your spiritual as well as temporal welfare, I am your most

Obedient and humble friend and servant,

JACOB DUCHÉ.

The treason of Duché is an event lightly touched upon in revolutionary history, but it was perhaps one of the most critical for the country; for it came upon the Commander-in-Chief and Congress like a flash of lightning out of a clear sky at a time when the American forces were at their weakest and Washington had little else to rely upon and sustain

him through his difficulties than the love and support given him by a few faithful officers and the rank and file of his constantly decreasing army.

The Duché letter was as fatal to the peace and reputation of its reverend author as its rejection by Washington was the grandest monument to that undeviating honor and integrity that shone with such constant splendor throughout his illustrious career.

As his hand clutches that treasonable correspondence with what determination has the German painter (Schusele) impressed his countenance! what a look is there in his stern, undaunted eye! How like a commander he sits—the attitude one of nobility, almost majesty—as he ponders over the wickedness of Duché! And so Arnold and Duché fled to England. They live in history two of the most consummate yet unsuccessful traitors the world has ever produced.

Duché married a sister of Francis Hopkinson, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, a pure patriot, who, when he heard of this great treason of his brother-in-law, wrote him the following letter:—

FRANCIS HOPKINSON TO JACOB DUCHÉ.

BORDENTOWN, 14 November, 1777.

DEAR BROTHER, — A letter signed with your name, dated at Philadelphia on the 8th of October, and addressed to his Excellency General Washington, is handed about the country. Many copies are taken, and I doubt not but it will soon get into the press and become public throughout the Continent. Words cannot express the grief and consternation that wounded my soul at the sight of this fatal performance. What infatuation could influence you to offer to his Excellency an address filled with gross misrepresentation, illiberal abuse, and sentiments unworthy of a man of character? You have endeavored to screen your own weaknesses by the most artful glosses and to apologize to the General for the instability of your temper in a manner that I am sure cannot be satisfactory to your own conscience.

I could go through this extraordinary letter and point out to you truth distorted in every leading part. But the world will doubtless do this with a severity that must be daggers to the sensibilities of your heart. Read that letter over again, and, if possible, divest yourself of the fears and influence, whatever they were, that induced you to pen it. Consider its contents with an impartial eye, and reflect on the ideas it will naturally raise in the minds of the multitude.

You will then find that by a vain and weak effort you have attempted the integrity of one whose virtue is impregnable to the assaults of fear or flattery, whose judgment needed not your information, and who I am sure would have resigned his charge the moment he found it likely to lead him out of the paths of

virtue and honor. You will find that you have drawn upon you the resentment of Congress, the resentment of the army, the resentment of many worthy and noble characters in England whom you know not, and the resentment of your insulted country. You have ventured to assert many things at large of the affairs of England, France, and America which are far from being true, and which from your contracted knowledge in these matters it is impossible for you to be acquainted with. In the whole of your letter you have never recommended yourself to those whose favor you seem desirous of obtaining by expatiating on the justice or humanity of their conduct, and at the same time have said everything that can render you odious to those on whom the happiness of your future life must depend.

You presumptuously advise our worthy General, on whom millions depend with implicit confidence, to abandon their dearest hopes, and with or without the consent of his constituents "*to negotiate for America at the head of his army.*"

Would not the blood of the slain in battle rise against such perfidy? And with whom would you have him negotiate? Are they not those who, without the sanction of any civil, moral, or religious right, have come three thousand miles to destroy our peace and property, to lay waste *your* native country with fire and sword, and cruelly murder its inhabitants? Look for their justice and honor in their several proclamations, and look for their humanity in the jails of New York and Philadelphia, and in your own Potter's Field. The whole force of the reasoning contained in your letter tends to this point: that virtue and honor require us to stand by truth, as long as it can be done with safety, but that her cause may be abandoned on the approach

of danger ; or, in other words, that the justice of the American cause ought to be squared by the success of her arms. On the whole, I find it impossible to reconcile the matter and style of this letter with your general conduct, or with the virtues of your heart. I would fain hope, notwithstanding your assertion to the contrary, that you wrote it with a bayonet held to your breast, by order of the unprincipled usurpers of your native city. But my chief motive for writing to you at this time is to assure you that I firmly believe that our just, defensive war will be crowned with success, and that we shall ere long return to our habitations in Philadelphia. I would, therefore, most earnestly warn you to evade the dismal consequences of your ill-judged address to our beloved General. Do all you can to wipe off, if possible, its unhappy effects. I tremble for you, for my good sister and her little family ; I tremble for your personal safety. Be assured I write this from true brotherly love. Our intimacy has been of a long duration, even from our early youth,—long and uninterrupted, without even a rub in the way ; and so long have the sweetness of your manners and the integrity of your heart fixed my affections.

I am perfectly disposed to attribute this unfortunate step to the timidity of your temper, the weakness of your nerves, and the undue influence of those about you. But will the world hold you so excused ? Will the individuals you have so freely censured and characterized with contempt have this tenderness for you ? I fear not. They will only judge of your conduct by its rashness, and proportion their resentment to their sensibility of the wounds you have given.

I pray God to inspire you with some means of extricating

yourself from this embarrassing difficulty. For my own part I have well considered the principles on which I took part with my country, and am determined to abide by them to the last extremity. I beg my love to my good mother and my affectionate sisters. I often think of them with great pain and anxiety lest they should suffer from the want of those necessary supplies that are now cut off. May God preserve them and you in this time of trial! I am, etc.,

FRANCIS HOPKINSON.

This is the letter of a true patriot, burning with a sense of shame at the dastardly and treasonable act of his sister's husband.

Joseph, the son of the patriotic writer of the above scathing letter, was the author of the patriotic song "Hail, Columbia!" which to this day has been accounted almost the national air of America.

Duché, sent out of the country, went to England, and was appointed preacher in the Lambeth Asylum. He appears to have tired of his mode of life after a residence of six years. Then he wrote to Washington begging him to use his best endeavors that he might return to this country. It was a mean sort of a letter, just what may be supposed a sycophant such as he was would write:—

JACOB DUCHÉ TO GEORGE WASHINGTON.

ASYLUM, LAMBETH, 2 April, 1783.

SIR,—Will your Excellency condescend to accept of a few lines from one who ever was and wishes still to be your sincere friend, who never *intentionally* sought to give you a moment's pain, who entertains for you the highest personal respect, and would be happy to be assured under your own hand that he does not labor under your displeasure, but that you freely forgive what a weak judgment but a very affectionate heart once presumed to advise? Many circumstances at present unknown to you conspired to make me deem it my duty to write to you. Ignorance and simplicity saw not the necessity of your divulging the letter. I am convinced, however, that you could not in your public station do otherwise. I cannot say a word in vindication of my conduct but this: that I had been for months before distressed with continual apprehensions for you and all my friends without the British lines. I looked upon all as gone, or that nothing could save you but rescinding the Declaration of Independence. Upon this ground alone I presumed to speak, not to advise an act of base treachery—my soul would have recoiled from the thought; not to surrender your army or betray the righteous cause of your country, but at the head of that army, *supporting and supported by them*, to negotiate with Britain for our constitutional rights.

Can you, then, join with my country in pardoning this error of judgment? Will you yet honor me with your great interest and influence by recommending, at least expressing your approbation of, the repeal of an act that keeps me in a state of banishment

from my native country, from the arms of a dear aged father and the embraces of a numerous circle of valuable and long-loved friends? Your liberal, generous mind I am persuaded will never exclude me wholly from your regard for a mere political error, especially as you must have heard that since the date of that letter I have led a life of perfect retirement, and since my arrival in England have devoted myself wholly to the duties of my profession and confined my acquaintance to a happy circle of literary and religious friends.

I have written to my father and many of my friends largely on this subject, requesting them to make such application to the State of Pennsylvania in my behalf as may be judged necessary and expedient. Should this application be honored with success, I know of nothing that would more effectually satisfy my desires in a matter of such importance to myself and my family as a line or two from your Excellency expressive of your approbation of my return. Temporal emoluments are not wanting to induce me to remain for life on this side of the Atlantic. I have been most hospitably received and kindly treated by all ranks of people, and I should be ungrateful not to acknowledge in the strongest terms my obligation to those who have placed me in the easy and comfortable situation I now enjoy. It is not necessity, therefore, but unalterable affection to my native country that urges me to seek return. With every good wish and prayer for your best felicity and my most hearty congratulations on the happy event of peace, I have the honor to be your Excellency's most obedient and humble servant,

JACOB DUCHÉ.

GEORGE WASHINGTON TO JACOB DUCHÉ.

HEADQUARTERS, 10 August, 1783.

SIR,—I have received your letter of the 2d of April, and reflecting on its contents I cannot but say that I am heartily sorry for the occasion which has produced it. Personal enmity I bear none to any man. So far, therefore, as your return to this country depends on my private voice it would be given in favor of it with cheerfulness. But removed as I am from the people and policy of the State in which you formerly resided, and to whose determination your case must be submitted, it is my duty whatever may be my inclination to leave its decision to its constitutional judges. Should this be agreeable to your wishes, it cannot fail to meet my entire approbation. I am, etc.,

GEORGE WASHINGTON.

Duché remained in England until 1790, a period of thirteen years, before he was permitted to return to his native land.

THE CONWAY CABAL.*

Thomas Conway was born in Ireland February 27, 1733, and was educated in France. He entered the army, and in 1777 had attained the rank of Colonel and the decoration of St. Louis. On the recommendation of our Minister, Silas Deane, he came to America and offered his services to the Continental

* The word "cabal," which signifies an intriguing faction, is derived from the French *cabale* and from the Hebrew *cabala*, *secret knowledge*. One of the ministries of Charles II. (1670) was called a cabal from the accident of the initials of its members' names forming that word.

Congress, and was made Brigadier-General May 13, 1777, and was present at the battles of Brandywine and Germantown. It is chiefly as the leader of what is known in American history as the "Conway cabal," a band of conspirators among certain disaffected officers to deprive Washington of the command of the army that his name is known at the present day. The plot was developed in the autumn of 1777, and received the open or secret support of a strong faction in Congress, including some able and patriotic men who were dissatisfied with what they thought the supineness of Washington and the Southern army in contrast with the victory that had just been won at Saratoga by the Northern army under General Gates, who had superseded General Schuyler, under whose command it had attained its great efficiency.

Through the influence of this faction Gates, a very inferior officer, was made President of the Board of War. Embittered by the opposition of Washington to the promotion of Conway, who was neither more nor less than an adventurer, the latter wrote anonymous letters to prominent men, alleging Washington's responsibility for recent disasters; and the charge has been made and believed that he forged Wash-

ington's name to papers designed to further the plans of the conspirators. General Wilkinson, under the influence of wine, disclosed some passages from a letter from Conway to Gates connecting the two in the conspiracy which put Washington in possession of their designs, whereupon the conspiracy fell to the ground. Conway, through the votes of the men opposed to the Commander-in-Chief and others who were honest in their intentions, was made Major-General; but in March, 1778, he lost the favor of Congress, and in a petulant moment offered his resignation, which was accepted unconditionally, and he was obliged against his will to leave the army.

The scheme of Conway embraced an attempt to separate Lafayette from the Commander-in-Chief. So Gates, the great head centre of the conspiracy to deprive Washington of the command of the army, planned an expedition to Canada, which was approved by Congress, and Lafayette was appointed to the command without Washington having been consulted. After an interview with Washington, in which the Commander-in-Chief advised him to accept the appointment as it was an honorable one, although it should have come from Washington and not direct from Congress, Lafayette accepted; but he

saw through the artifice of the "cabal." After remaining in Albany three months without receiving the men and stores he had been promised, he returned to the camp at Valley Forge under instructions from Congress.

Lossing in his "Field Book of the Revolution" quotes from Sparks, that when Lafayette arrived at York, Pa., where Congress was sitting, he found Gates at table surrounded by his friends. The marquis was received with great cordiality, and accepted an invitation to join them at table. The wine passed round and several toasts were drank. Determined to let his sentiments be known at the outset, he called to the company as they were about to rise, and observed that one toast had been omitted which he would propose. The glasses were filled, and he gave "The Commander-in-Chief of the American Armies." The coolness with which it was received confirmed Lafayette in the suspicion that intentional disrespect was intended to Washington by Gates, Conway, and the other disaffected officers of the "cabal."

In July, 1778, General John Cadwallader, a personal friend and a strong adherent of Washington

and his policy, challenged Conway because of his attack upon the Commander-in-Chief. The meeting took place July 22d, and Conway was badly wounded, so much so that his life was for a long time despaired of. He was shot in the mouth, and fell forward upon his face. Raising himself, he remarked to Cadwallader, "You fire with much deliberation, General, and certainly with a great deal of effect."

While Conway was lying on what was thought would be his death-bed, he wrote the following repentant letter of apology to Washington:—

THOMAS CONWAY TO GENERAL WASHINGTON.

PHILADELPHIA, 23d July, 1778.

SIR,—I feel myself just able to hold the pen during a few minutes, and take this opportunity of expressing my sincere grief for having done, written, or said anything disagreeable to your Excellency. My career will soon be over, therefore justice and truth prompt me to declare my last sentiments. You are, in my eyes, the great and good man. May you long enjoy the love, veneration, and esteem of those States whose liberties you have asserted by your virtues! I am with great respect,

THOMAS CONWAY.

Upon his recovery he returned to France, and was appointed Governor of Pondicherry and the

French settlements of Hindustan. He was an unfortunate ruler, and upon the expiration of his term of service returned to France, but fled the country during the Revolution. His subsequent fate deserves no mention.

We cannot do better in bringing this monograph to a close than to repeat the words of Lossing: "Valley Forge! How dear to the true worshipper at the shrine of Freedom is the name of Valley Forge! There in the midst of frost and snows, disease and destitution, Liberty erected her altar; and in all the world's history we have no record of purer devotion, holier sincerity, or more pious self-sacrifice than was there exhibited in the camp of Washington.

"And if there is a spot on the face of our broad land whereon patriotism should delight to pile its highest and most venerated monument, it should be in the bosom of that little vale on the bank of the Schuylkill. Toward its templed hills, consecrated by the presence and sufferings of those who achieved our independence, we journeyed, filled with the pleasant emotions of a pilgrim approaching the place he most adores.

“Hunger and nakedness assailed the dreary winter camp at Valley Forge with all their progeny of disease and woe. The prevalence of Toryism in the vicinity, the avaricious peculations of some unprincipled commissioners, the tardy movements of Congress in supplying provisions, and the close proximity of a powerful enemy, combined to make the procurement of provisions absolutely impracticable without a resort to force. But few horses were in the camp; and such was the deficiency in these for the ordinary as well as extraordinary occasions of the army that the men in many instances cheerfully yoked themselves to vehicles of their own construction for carrying wood and provisions when procured, while others performed the duty of pack-horses and carried heavy burdens upon their backs.”

While the army was undergoing all these sufferings Washington was wounded in the house of his friends. Jealous and ambitious men were conspiring to tarnish the fair fame of the Commander-in-Chief, to weaken the affection of the people for him, and to place the supreme military command in other hands.

“As a military commander he succeeded in attaining to a perfectly accurate estimate of the character

and extent of the resources which his own country could supply, and was enabled to conduct the war on a plan best adapted to the circumstances. Does the world's history record the deeds of any greater or more successful military commander? As a military soldier he drew the sword, 'not for himself, but for his country,' and sheathed it with the same motto.

"He was a Cromwell without his ambition, a Scylla without his crimes, and after having raised his country by the greatest sacrifices and hardships to the rank of an independent state, he closed his career by a voluntary relinquishment of the power which a grateful people had bestowed." (*Washington as a Soldier : Finley.*)

This monograph opened with a quotation from Prof. John Fiske's "American Revolution," and a fitting close to it will be an extract from the same writer's "War of Independence," in which he says:—

"To the highest qualities of a military commander there were united in Washington those of a political leader. From early youth he possessed the art of winning men's confidence. He was simple without

awkwardness, honest without bluntness, and endowed with rare discretion and tact. His temper was fiery, and on occasion he could use pretty strong language, but anger or disappointment was never allowed to disturb the justice and kindness of his judgment. Men felt themselves safe in putting entire trust in his head and his heart, and they were never deceived. Thus he soon obtained such a hold upon the people as few statesmen have ever possessed. It was this grand character that, with his clear intelligence and unflagging industry, enabled him to lead the nation triumphantly through the perils of the Revolutionary War. He had almost every imaginable hardship to contend with, — envious rivals, treachery and mutiny in the camp, interference on the part of Congress, jealousies between the States, want of men and money, yet all these difficulties he vanquished. Whether victorious or defeated on the field, he baffled the enemy in the first year's great campaign and in the second year's, and then for four years more upheld the cause, until heart-sickening delay was ended in glorious triumph. It is very doubtful if without Washington the struggle for independence would have succeeded as it did. Other men were important, he was indispensable."

Thank God for our country that its enemies, foreign and domestic, were smitten with unsucccess, that Valley Forge still remains to us with its horrors of war a monument of the great love of the Continental army toward its beloved General,— Washington,— who, in the words of Henry Lee, was “first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.”

BENJ. F. STEVENS.

PRESIDENT.

BENJAMIN F. STEVENS.

VICE-PRESIDENT.

ALFRED D. FOSTER.

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